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Fishermen, Delta Leaders: Exporters “Destroy Delta Smelt” ***Export Projects Overpumping Delta During Drought Destroys Fisheries*** ***If Endangered Species Become Extinct, Fault Will Be With State Water Board*** ***and Captive Fish Agencies***

Stockton, CA - Restore the Delta (RTD) and other opponents of Gov. Brown’s rush to build massive underground Tunnels that would drain the Delta of freshwater and doom sustainable farms, and salmon and other Pacific fisheries, today responded to the finding that Delta Smelt may be extinct. The latest state trawl survey found just six smelt to date. The smelt may be reaching the point of no return if swift action is not taken. The tunnels opponents criticized a move by the State Water Board to further weaken Delta outflow and water quality standards, making even more likely the decimation of this one-time most abundant Delta species, and winter-run Chinook salmon this year. The Delta smelt is the species that indicates overall health of the estuary.

Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, Executive Director of Restore the Delta, said, “Restore the Delta and its partners have worked for 8 years for the protection of Delta smelt. Excessive water pumping by the State and Federal water exporters, especially on behalf of those growing almonds in the Westlands Water District and Kern County, has led to the collapse of the estuary. And here in the fifth year of drought, the State Water Resources Control Board has left open a loophole that one could drive a Mack truck through, by allowing water exporters to tell the board how much water they need, and allowing for emergency water for these same growers. State and Federal fish agencies are failing to enforce laws to protect fisheries.”

“The estuary is unraveling; California is running out of water; and all the Brown Administration can talk about is dry tunnels that will save neither the fish, nor the people of California. How much longer will the Brown Administration fiddle, and ignore that California must adjudicate water rights. Huge industrial farms on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley cannot be sustained while the estuary collapses,” said Barrigan-Parrilla.

“The State Water Board, even in the face of near-extinction of Delta smelt and salmon, is proposing to drastically relax minimal water quality and flow standards enacted to protect the Bay-Delta and tributary streams, for the third year in a row. Delta and longfin smelt and Winter-run salmon have collapsed to less than one percent of historic numbers, and are facing

extinction. Yet the Water Board and the Governor expect our rivers and fisheries to bear the burden and suffer the consequences of mismanagement, even as additional acres of almonds are planted in the Valley. The Delta is a national treasure belonging to all of the people in the state and nation. It must not be sacrificed to the insatiable greed of special interests,” said Bill Jennings, executive director of the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance (CSPA).

The State Water Board's action:

- Lowered Delta outflow for purpose of managing the ecosystems and salinity control - bad for fish, good for invasive species, helps storage by reducing how much water the projects send from upstream reservoirs to keep salt out of the Delta.

Droughts are recurrent and predictable weather patterns in California. Droughts are not emergencies, except when our water agencies fail to manage for their recurrence. Current water quality objectives give a green light to the Department of Water Resources and the Bureau of Reclamation to gamble that each water year will be normal to wet: they prioritize upstream storage for exports to south of Delta storage, resulting in a “beggar-thy-neighbor” competition pitting against each other exports, salinity control, fish protection, and ecosystem-protective outflows.

This situation is preventable and state and federal agencies failed to prevent it.

“Mismanagement of our water resources by the State of California and federal government are sending both the endangered salmon and Delta smelt to extinction. Their political favoring of billionaire growers over the rest of us is finishing off the fish,” said Barrigan-Parrilla. “Gov. Brown favors big agribusinesses on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley over the economic and environmental needs of the people who live in the Bay-Delta Estuary. Our salmon fisheries support a \$1.5 billion economy, Delta farming a \$5.2 billion economy. With this drought, we are poised to lose Delta smelt, Winter-run salmon, and steelhead as these fisheries are collapsing. Where is Gov. Brown’s concern for the people who live and work in the estuary?”

Restore the Delta is a 15,000-member grassroots organization committed to making the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta fishable, swimmable, drinkable, and farmable to benefit all of California. Restore the Delta works to improve water quality so that fisheries and farming can thrive together again in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. www.restorethedelta.org